

fine, don't particularly like the bill. But I would like to say this, let's advance the bill to Select File. Then we can go to Social Services and we can say we gave you some money, is the need there to close the offices? The money is in there for the staff and we would like to see just what happens if we had that opportunity to make that approach and see what happens. So I would ask you to advance the bill to Select File. If things cannot be worked out, then I will come back and I will be the first one to stand up here and say that we should change it. So, with that, Mr. President, I will close my remarks.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Vard Johnson, followed by Senator Jacklyn Smith and Paul Hartnett.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. President or Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, during the special session I stood by Governor Kerrey and the Appropriations Committee all the way in terms of these cuts, and each time I voted for this particular cut, I gritted my teeth because I felt in my heart that I was not doing right by rural Nebraska. And I also knew that to be responsible to our fidelity to no tax increase, I had to make cuts someplace and so that is why I stood by them. But a few weeks have gone by since that time and I have had some conversations with some new people and a new administration and what I have learned from people that I know, and trust, and like a great deal is that as they come into a new administration they note that an awful lot of state government today is in disarray. They know that it is in disarray because for six years we have done nothing but just squeeze, and push, and cut, and take a little out here, a little out there, a little nick here, and so on and so forth, and state government today is just not as good as it was six years ago, just not as good as it was, not as strong as it was. Don Leuenberger, the new Tax Commissioner, told the Revenue Committee just a couple of days ago that the Department of Revenue today is not as capable of doing audits and collecting money as it was six years ago because the cuts just finally ground it down. When they can't fill vacancies, and vacancies always occur, you know, so vacancies this year, you can't fill them, and then you get a few more vacancies, and you can't fill those, and next year, and the next year, and the next year, you finally end up with kind of a bony structure. The flesh has gotten thin. Well, that is the Department of Revenue. I have heard that story from organization after organization in this state, that what you and I have done collectively is we have slowly permitted some of the lifeblood to flow out of those veins, and so I said to myself yesterday, when I knew this